



THIS ISSUE

COVID-19 Services Update
In-Person Services Update
Staff Spotlights
Client Corners
Office Highlight: Owatonna
Success Stories
Partner Spotlight
Spring Favorites
Random Recommendation
Home Office Spotlight

STAY CONNECTED



SEMWorkforce



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Workforce Development, Inc.



semnworkforce



Workforce Development, Inc.



hello@wdimn.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Outreach Specialists Meeting
March 15 - 10:30 a.m.

MaxAbility Taskforce
March 17 - 9 a.m.

Dislocated Worker Orientation
March 17 - 10 a.m.

Career Café
March 22 - 10 a.m.

Employment & Equity Taskforce
March 25 - 9 a.m.

SE MN One Stop Partners Forum
March 28 - 1 p.m.

Essential Skills Meeting
March 30 - 2 p.m.

COVID-19 SERVICES UPDATE

Struggling due to the pandemic? We can help. Our Career Planners can help get you back to work as soon as possible. WDI's FREE services are tailored to meet individual needs such as...

- Career Planning and Counseling (Virtual & In-Person)
- Job Search Assistance
- Counselor Approved Training
- Support Services
- Resume Reviews & Assistance
- Guided Career Exploration
- Virtual Career Cafes
- Interactive Networking Sessions
- Weekly Job Boards
- Free Career Assessments
- Mock Interview Practice
- And More!

Don't miss out on the career of your dreams. Connect with one of our SE MN CareerForce or WDI office locations in Albert Lea, Austin, Caledonia, Faribault, Kasson, Owatonna, Preston, Red Wing, Rochester, and Wabasha today.

REMINDER: IN-PERSON, WALK-IN SERVICES AVAILABLE!



After an unprecedented season of virtual and appointment-only services, Workforce Development, Inc. is excited to announce that we have reopened to the public for in-person, walk-in services! If you are interested in meeting onsite and/or utilizing our resource areas, please reach out to your local office for updated hours. Virtual services will continue to be offered for those that prefer them going forward. We look forward to seeing many of our clients back in our offices!



STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



CARRIE JOHNSON
DW CAREER PLANNER
OWATONNA OFFICE



Hello to my fellow WDI employees. I am Carrie Johnson, the Dislocated Worker Career Planner in our newly reopened Owatonna office. I have lived in the Owatonna community for over 30 years. I am excited about being able to be a part of keeping the community strong by having a solid and diverse workforce. Things that keep me grounded are a delicious cup of coffee, some smooth jazz music, a good mystery book, our family game nights, a soul-searching devotional and a great new recipe. I am a lifelong learner and enjoy new opportunities to continue to learn things.

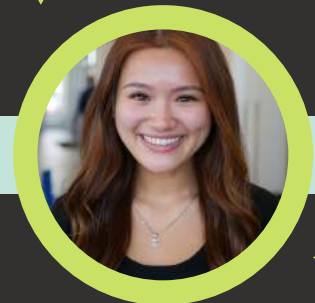
I bring the perspective of having been enrolled in the Dislocated Worker program. I understand the challenges and stresses that come with being dislocated from your employment. I know what a life changing event this can be; I also know that sometimes you just ended up going with the safe choice. I bring my life coaching experience to my new position; I have worked with many clients during times of transition. I enjoy helping clients find their answers. I am so blessed to be able to do what I do.

Hi everyone!

My name is Jennifer Dang, I am the new Public Sector/Career Navigator at Workforce Development, Inc. I have the absolute pleasure of working in the heart-warming Rochester office! In my position, I have the opportunity to work with incredible employees from Hawthorne Education Center and RCTC. We all work together to keep the students on track with their schooling and eventually, into employment. How rewarding!

In 2020, I graduated from Winona State University in Rochester, where I received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree. Throughout high school and college, I have balanced working as a server, childcare provider, and front desk coordinator. Prior to joining WDI, I worked at Collins Orthodontics as a Patient Care Coordinator, Subaru of Rochester in the Business Development Center/Sales, and Cigna Insurance as a Provider Relations Analyst. I am beyond excited to start this journey of growth with WDI!

I was born and raised in Rochester, where I am surrounded by my immediate and extended family. I love traveling, keeping myself active, and bonding over trying new restaurants/food. Two random facts about me are that I am bilingual, specifically Vietnamese, and I have been vegan for almost three years. 😊



JENNIFER DANG
BRIDGES CAREER NAVIGATOR
ROCHESTER OFFICE





MELANIE BERSANO
REGIONAL CAREER PATHWAYS
COORDINATOR
ROCHESTER OFFICE

- I have come to WDI from Mayo Clinic where I worked while completing my graduate degree, Master's in Health and Human Services Administration.
- Previously, I worked as a librarian at the Kasson Public Library where I was able to indulge my love of reading and education. Anything is possible between the pages of a book.
- I love being outside and enjoying the region's many state parks and hiking trails. During warm weather my partner and I spend long days cruising in our convertible.
- I am the new Regional Career Pathways Coordinator and am so excited to join WDI. I am located in Rochester but look forward to traveling the region and meeting everyone.

Hello all. My name is Kristen Halverson. I am from the Faribault office as the Youthbuild Career Planner alongside Daryl Kiesow the Youthbuild Instructor. My previous work experience is from Federated Insurance in Owatonna, International Quality Homecare based out of Rochester, and most recently at Mayo Clinic teleworking. I reside in Owatonna and I have an 8-year-old daughter named Harper; she is in the second grade. We have a tuxedo kitty named Mia. In my free time, I enjoy being outside in nature and around water. I enjoy Owatonna's wonderful trail system, Saturday morning farmers markets, and beautiful parks. Southern Minnesota is a wonderful place to be born and raised and I love living here as an adult. I hope you do too!



KRISTEN HALVERSON
YOUTHBUILD CAREER PLANNER
FARIBAULT OFFICE



BRIANNA STEBBINS
MFIP & DWP CAREER PLANNER
ROCHESTER OFFICE

Hey folks! My name is Brianna Stebbins and I started my position as a Career Planner (MFIP & DWP) in November of 2021. I am working out of the Rochester office, and I am loving the welcoming and warm environment here. I am beyond thrilled to work for WDI, helping and working with the community.

I graduated early from St. Catherine University in December of 2019 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. I spent my last semester adventuring throughout Europe, in Italy, Spain, Denmark, Ireland, and Sweden. After college I moved to Mexico for a year to continue my adventures. I have worked teaching English as a second language, and as a recovery specialist for an MICD drug and alcohol residential rehab facility.

In my free time I enjoy painting, collecting more crystals, thrifting, advocating for BIPOC and LGBTQIA peeps, yoga, going to meditation retreats, music, hiking, traveling, and trying my best to not kill my plants.

My name is Kim Purscell, and I am the new Outreach Specialist for Rice and Steele Counties. I started in mid-October, and work out the new Owatonna office, but will spend most of my time bopping around between two counties. As an Outreach Specialist, I work with employers, educators, and community partners, learning about their organizations, uncovering needs and gaps, and promoting WDI services to them, as well as connecting them to other resources. On the job seeker side, I help to educate people of WDI services in order to direct them into our offices for service.

This job brings together all my skills and passions into one nice, neat package, because I love public speaking; I love connecting people; and I love WDI... it's a match made in heaven.

On a personal side, I grew up in Kenora, Ontario, Canada, and worked in my parent's furniture factory. After high school, I attended several colleges, Confederation in Canada, Mt. San Antonio College in Los Angeles, and Bethel College in St. Paul; I changed majors three times, ultimately finishing with my BA in Communications. I've had an amazing career history working for two airlines, one in Canada, one in the US; I've worked at the Owatonna Chamber, the Initiative Foundation, the Red Cross and the United Way. Most recently, I was self-employed under the name Etiquette Matters, teaching image, communications, and people skills at colleges, private schools, businesses, and to Treatment Court participants. In fact, I became aware of WDI when Susan Boehm hired me to teach a class earlier this year for students under the MnDOT grant.

My husband, Dave, and I have been married for 29 years, and we are still on our honeymoon 😊. We have two boys together who are both grown, and we are grandparents to two amazing kids. Of course, I can't forget to mention my precious little Yorkie, Lexi, who is my sweet, funny fur baby. In my spare time, I enjoy gardening, cooking, sipping wine by our pond (which we built this year), and entertaining.



KIM PURSCCELL
OUTREACH SPECIALIST
OWATONNA OFFICE

CLIENT CORNER



CAREER NAVIGATOR: BRANDEN PATTEN

I'm excited to share that these three (from left to right) Sarah Monyzal, Elizabeth Zook, and Gelila Asfaw were so happy to have passed their much anticipated CNA exam, and they wanted to celebrate with a photo op! They passed on December 7, 2021 and each of them has either found work since, or has notified their current employer of their recent certification. A great success to be shared!



My name is Annabelle Wagner and I started with this fabulous company on November 8, 2021 as a Career Planner for the Dislocated Worker program in Faribault. I live in Northfield, MN with my husband Joe, our 17-year-old daughter Madeline, and kitty, Lola. I also have three successful stepsons in their thirties. We are originally from Austin, MN. I attended the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse back in the day, where I received my Bachelor's degree in Sociology with a minor in Psychology. Although I have not furthered my education, I never say never. I have had some incredible job/volunteer experiences in the Social Service and Education fields throughout my career. I have had the opportunity to work with several diverse populations, from prenatal to elderly. I lived in Minneapolis/St. Paul for 17 years working with Homeless Prevention programs and with so many incredible organizations all working towards ending homelessness. This is my passion! My eyes were opened wide while doing home visits in low income, disadvantaged neighborhoods and with the St. Paul Police's FORCE unit where I worked for 10 years as a Child Advocate. The majority of society has no idea how other people live until you are in their "shoes".

I was brought up to serve people who were less fortunate than me and it has stayed with me throughout my life. Most recently before coming to WDI, I was an (ASD), Autism Special Education teacher for middle school students. This is also a population of individuals that have my heart. Working for WDI, I feel like I've come full circle. I am so excited to be working to help folks obtain a meaningful, gainful job or career! Thank you WDI!!

On a more personal note, I enjoy everything outdoors: flower gardening, walking, hiking, biking, swimming, and driving my 1971 Volkswagon Super Beetle around town. I love to read, listen to all kinds of music, love thrift store shopping, road trips, and traveling. Most importantly, I love spending time with our daughter before we become empty nesters!!



ANNABELLE WAGNER
DW CAREER PLANNER
FARIBAULT OFFICE

CLIENT CORNER

Hello Jody,

I want to use this opportunity to thank you personally and the whole workforce team for helping me achieve a dream I thought I could never attain. But through your help, I was able to get this degree.

Thank you for your excellent work and for believing in me. May God bless you.

Sincerely,
Abubacarr



CAREER PLANNER: JODY SCHABER



I want to seize this opportunity to thank everyone that support me obtaining my masters degree love you all.

WDI OFFICE HIGHLIGHT: OWATONNA



We are so excited to again have an office open in Owatonna! The state approved the funding for the office at the end of June 2021 and by mid-October 2021 we secured our new location at 1850 Austin Rd. We are especially pleased to be colocated with our friends and collaborators United Way of Steele County. Open drop-in hours for the office are Tuesday and Thursdays from 9a-3pm or any day by appointment. Let's take a minute to introduce the team in Owatonna.

Carrie Johnson is the Dislocated Worker Career Planner serving adults who are on unemployment and need help figuring out their best next steps. She provides assistance with resumes, career exploration, and can even help pay for retraining for her clients who want to enter a new Career Pathway. Kim Purscell is our Outreach Specialist who spends much of her time reaching out to local business and organizations to help match career seekers with the job and training opportunities that businesses have available. Megan Horton runs the Steele Co Works program, a partnership with the United Way and Owatonna Chamber of Commerce that helps high school students explore careers and get placed in work experiences. This enables the students to be fully prepared and employed in Owatonna's local workforce when they graduate. Dawne Buttera is a Navigator for our Bridges to Healthcare program. She works with Owatonna Adult Basic Education students to help them finish the education they need to work in the healthcare field. Finally, Jawahir Mohamed is our On-Ramp Navigator and helps Adult Basic Education students get prepared for work in Manufacturing and Information Technologies sectors. The office may look small but we've got a LOT going on!

Submitted by Mike Postma, Area Manager of Rice & Steele Counties

FEATURED SUCCESS STORY: BROOKE MORENO



In March 2021, Brooke Moreno had been working as a server at 1st of Thai restaurant in Faribault when she, like many other parents, was forced with a decision to make. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that Brooke's daughter would be transitioning to distance learning. As a single parent, Brooke felt that she had no option but to leave her role so that she could stay home and support her daughter.

"I found myself on Unemployment for the first time in my life at 32," Brooke told staff at Workforce Development. Brooke felt that this time of transition was an opportunity in her life to think intentionally about the next step she wanted to take in building her career. Going back to school had always been something Brooke had wanted to do, and when she connected with a Career Planner at Workforce Development through the Dislocated Worker program, Brooke knew that this was her shot.

Brooke recounted those first few conversations with her Career Planner as they discussed her skillsets and strengths. Brooke knew that she was passionate about massage therapy and that the Aveda Arts and Sciences Institute in Minneapolis had a strong reputation that would make her well-prepared to start a career in massage therapy. Through the support of two new grants awarded to Workforce Development – one aimed to help those who have lost their job because of the Covid-19 pandemic and one to help those impacted by the opioid crisis in Minnesota – Brooke's tuition to attend Aveda Arts and Sciences Institute would be paid for.

After five months of attending school full time, Brooke completed her 600-hour Massage Therapy course at the Aveda Arts and Sciences Institute in Minneapolis and received her Massage Therapist License. "Like most people," Brooke explained, "the Covid-19 pandemic has made a major impact in my life. But there was nothing better or more honoring than to be motivated by my own union and community."

Brooke now offers massage appointments at Studio 14 Salon and Spa in Faribault as well as at Humfeld Chiropractic & Nutrition Center in Faribault. She has also decided that she will be starting her own massage therapy business: M.M.M Serenity, LLC. Brooke will be joining the Converting Layoffs Into Minnesota Businesses (CLIMB) program which is designed to help Minnesota residents start their own businesses.

When asked how it felt going from unemployed to full time student to now entrepreneur in the last year, Brooke stated, "I am proud of myself for making an example for my teenage kid and I am happy our community is there to help us pick ourselves up during hardship. It was not easy but I had the ability to move forward each day with the support of the staff at the CareerForce center. I could not ask for a better support system."

To learn more about Brooke's massage therapy journey or to schedule an appointment with Brooke, check out her website at <https://www.mmmserenity.com/>.

Submitted by Cassie Wessing, Youth Career Planner

SUCCESS STORIES



Felicia was set up in a work experience at Kibble Equipment where Workforce Development, Inc. paid the first 200 hours of her wages. After she completed her hours, Kibble Equipment decided to hire her on. This opportunity gave her experience in her career area of interest as well as general work skills. Felicia knew she wanted to go into a career field where she would be working with her hands and her family inspired her to become a diesel mechanic. There are not many females working in the industry, and this also inspired her to pursue this career field. Working on heavy equipment triggers her mind by figuring out how to take things apart and put them back together. At Kibble she also learned patience through waiting for parts and the time it takes to build things as well as working with customers. Felicia said, "It has been a good experience working at Kibble; they treat me like family. I have also learned that I need to work hard in school so I can graduate and get to where I want to be." After she graduates, she plans to go to college to become a diesel mechanic and wants to continue her career at Kibble Equipment.

Submitted by Megan Horton, Workforce Coordinator

When I started at WDI in April of 2021, I was transferred a client who had been working with the career planner before me. She had been out of work and searching for a job for right around one year at that time. When I met with her, she expressed that she was starting to lose hope and lose confidence in herself. She couldn't understand why she wasn't being offered jobs or even interviews. She had a commendable work history and an updated resume and cover letter. She was working hard each day applying at different jobs in the area. She seemed to be running out of steam.

She started to feel even more depressed because she was having trouble keeping up with her bills and other expenses. I encouraged her and lifted her up- I offered her all the possible financial and transportation supports available to us, as well as emotional support. I reminded her that the job search process can be long and tedious, and I even shared a bit of my own personal job search history; I let her know that I was starting to feel the same way before I got hired here at WDI. This seemed to help her a bit, and she kept in contact with me weekly to ask my opinion about certain applications or seek feedback on different aspects of her job search process.

What really stood out to me was her perseverance; despite countless disappointments and refusals, she continued to apply. She had her heart set on Mayo Clinic and had applied and been turned down for the same few jobs repeatedly. Even though she continued to be rejected, she continued to reapply. Finally, after a year and a half of this, she was offered not one, but two job interviews at Mayo Clinic! She went to them both and was offered both! After all the disappointment, she got to pick between two of her top job choices at Mayo! This just goes to show that with determination and a bit of support from others, success is possible. I am so proud to be part of this wonderful organization where I can really make a difference in people's lives.

Submitted by Hannah Mayer, Career Planner



WDI PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: FAMILIES FIRST OF MINNESOTA



**Formerly
Child Care
Resource &
Referral**

For over 40 years Families First of Minnesota, an non-profit agency serving the Olmsted County area, has taken great strides in “ensuring positive beginnings for all young children and their families” by offering the following programs: Head Start, Early Head Start, School Readiness, Crisis Nursery, Child Care Aware, and Early Learning Scholarships.

Many of the families we serve here at Workforce Development, Inc. benefit from the programs offered at Families First. Parentaware.org offered through Families First gives families the tools they need to identify and search for quality childcare and early education programs. Crisis Nursery provides temporary short-term childcare to families experiencing a crisis. For more information or to access this service please call 507-287-2020.

Are you working with anyone interested in becoming a Licensed Child Care Provider for Olmsted County? Since the COVID19 Pandemic, many in-home childcare providers and center-based childcare programs have closed their doors. It is important to rebuild and grow the childcare industry to support our working families. Families First of Minnesota is offering one-on-one sessions to potential childcare providers that cover business and record keeping, training requirements needed, and resources available to effectively operate an effective childcare program. Interested candidates can reach out to Gwen Lynch 507-316-8710 or gwenl@familiesfirstmn.org.

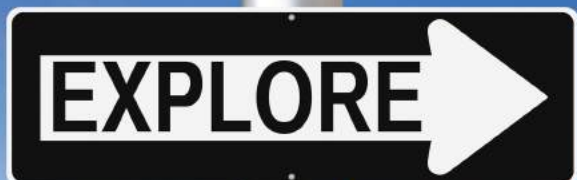
Families First is also offering start up grants to recently licensed or soon-to-be licensed childcare providers or childcare programs. For more information contact Dawn Eckhoff 507-424-1525 or dawne@familiesfirstmn.org. To apply online: familiesfirstmn.org/services/grants/startup/

Submitted by Amy Fitt, Career Planner





SPRING FAVORITES



The No Sleep Podcast is a multi-award winning anthology series of original horror stories, with rich atmospheric music to enhance the frightening tales.

The reason why I like this podcast is that it is the perfect runtime for my frequent trips to the Twin Cities to visit my significant other's family. Most of the episodes are between 1.25 hours to 2 hours long. Within each episode there are multiple stories and characters that are played by professional voice actors. The tales that are told go with the season and can make any holiday/season/global event into a interesting creepy story.



HOME OFFICE SPOTLIGHT



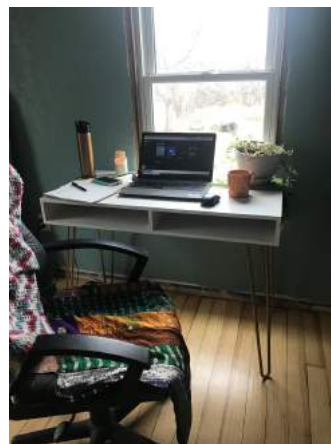
The official start of spring is just days away, and I'm beyond excited for some sunshine and warmer temperatures after a LONG winter. Southeast Minnesota has a ton to offer in these more outdoor-friendly months. In no particular order, here are a few things I'm looking forward to revisiting this spring.

- Live music and cold brew coffee at the Rochester Farmers Markets
- People watching at Thursdays Downtown
- Hiking with my dogs at Quarry Hill Nature Center
- Day trips to Lanesboro for biking and local theater
- Checking out SE MN's local brewery scene - there are more than you'd think!
- Relaxing on one of Rochester's many great patios
- The return of outdoor thrifting and flea markets
- And so much more!

What would you add to my list? Let me know!



RANDOM RECOMMENDATION



Take a peek at Youth Career Planner Rachel Davis' home office! What keeps her going while out of the office? "When I'm working from home, I really enjoy being able to see the sunshine coming in through my window. On cloudy or snowy days I like to light a candle and pull up different ambient music scenes on YouTube and have those going in the background to make a warm & cozy atmosphere. I also look forward to making myself a matcha latte in the afternoon!"

Contact

All WDI services are free! Our services include assessment, career planning, skills training, job search guidance and resources, and preparation for further training and education. We also offer scholarships and connections to many other great programs and resources in Southeast Minnesota. Contact us today!

Albert Lea

2200 Riverland Drive
Albert Lea, MN 56007
(507) 821-1010
(888) 438-5627
FAX (507) 379-3413

Austin*

1600 8th Ave. NW
Austin, MN 55912
(507) 460-5020
(888) 438-5627
FAX (507) 433-0591

Caledonia

110 East Grove St.
Caledonia, MN 55921
(507) 724-5231
(800) 657-4629
FAX (507) 724-5331

Faribault*

201 S. Lyndale Ave.
Ste. 1
Faribault, MN 55021
(507) 333-2088
(888) 234-5711
FAX (507) 332-5487

Kasson

504 S. Mantorville Ave.
Ste. 4
Kasson, MN 55944
(507) 512-6205
(877) 778-2227
FAX (507) 513-7988

Owatonna

1850 Austin Road
Ste. 102
Owatonna, MN 55060
(507) 333-2088
(888) 234-5711
FAX (507) 332-5487

Preston

100 South Main St. SE
Preston, MN 55965
(507) 765-2476
(800) 584-6770
FAX (507) 765-4737

Red Wing

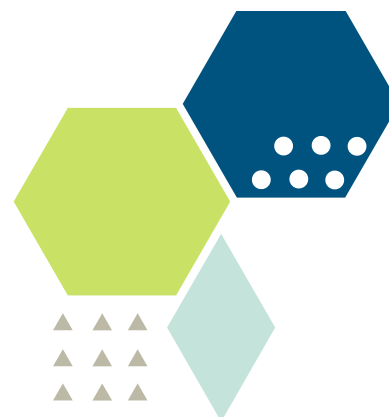
308 Pioneer Road
Red Wing, MN 55066
(651) 385-6402
(800) 584-6753
FAX (651) 385-6345

Rochester*

2070 College View Road East
Rochester, MN 55904
(507) 292-5152
(800) 543-5627
FAX (507) 529-2716

Wabasha

222 West Main St.
Wabasha, MN 55981
(651) 565-2635
(800) 657-5105
FAX (651) 565-2809



*** = CareerForce location**